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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR US SPEAKER FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

SUMMARY: Post requests IIP/S's assistance to recruit a US expert on Afro-American history and the contributions of Afro-Americans in building America, looking at their achievements in transforming history, politics, economics and culture. Speaker would take part in a five-day program February 22 through February 26 in Bogota, Cali, and Medellin, co-sponsored by the Cali and Medellin BNCs, to commemorate Black History Month. Drawing on US historical experience, the program would address issues of significance to Afro-Colombian populations including bridging diverse communities, strengthening democracy through higher education access, economic development and the fostering of minority entrepreneurship, and political participation. The program will include presentations at various venues for GOC officials, NGOs, special interest groups, key university audiences and the Embassy's MLK Fellows program participants in the three cities. Schedule will also include other public affairs activities such as media encounters and representational functions. Post's objective with this program is to focus the attention of young and potentially influential audiences on the contributions of diversity to democratic development, as Colombia celebrates its independence bicentennial in 2010. End summary.

BACKGROUND: Black History Month affords the opportunity to underscore Afro-American achievements and contributions to the historical and political transformation of contemporary U.S. society. Afro-Colombians constitute 25 percent of the total population of Colombia - the largest minority group in the country - geographically distributed in the Pacific, Caribbean and Northeastern regions. They have remained a neglected ethnic group profoundly affected by disadvantaged socio-economic conditions worsened with the long internal conflict. Although the GOC has made some efforts to change these conditions, hopelessness persists. Impoverished socio-economic conditions have deteriorated institutional credibility and threatened democratic stability. This program will use the US experience in promoting new narratives and forms of interpretation of black history in America to highlight the significance of advancing democratic principles, economic empowerment, and promoting respect for civil rights of all Colombians while underscoring the importance of encouraging improved social conditions, educational opportunities and containment of violence in areas of the country perceived as abandoned.

US SPEAKER: The speaker should be prepared to address significant achievements and contributions of Afro-Americans in the U.S. from a historical perspective, focusing on strategies employed to attain equality, economic opportunity, civil rights, and diversity within U.S. democracy. We

would like to request that IIP recruit an academic, preferably an historian or sociologist with significant knowledge of comparative studies of slavery and ethno-racial relations, the history of African Diaspora in the Americas or race issues in the Americas prepared to draw comparisons on the role of black populations in building nations in the Americas. We would like a recognized scholar, ideally Afro-American, prepared to address these issues.

PROGRAM AND AUDIENCE:

The speaker will take part in a mixed program of formal presentations, representational functions and press encounters in Bogot????, Cali and Medellin. In Bogot????, the speaker will encounter academic audiences at Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Los Andes University; the Ministry of Culture, and major Afro-Colombian NGO's as well as DOS Alumni including MLK Fellows nationwide. MLK Fellows program is a USAID funded program to provide English language training to economically disadvantaged Afro-Colombian university students, to promote access opportunities to advanced higher education in the US. In Cali, he/she will take part in a series of presentations at Del Valle university and will participate in a round-table session with MLK Fellows at the Cali BNC. The program will also include a meeting with a select group of local government representatives to discuss community issues and share views on economic, cultural and political transformation and impact on community development. In Medellin the program will include presentations at Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad de Medellin, encounters with city government authorities, and a round-table discussion at the BNC with MLK Fellows. Press interviews will be arranged in all cities. Please schedule the speaker to arrive Bogot???? February 21 in the evening and return to the US February 27 from Medellin. Spanish fluency is a requirement for this program.

CONTROL OFFICER: Control Officer for this program is CAO Rex Moser. Office phone: 571-315-2201. Home phone: 571-317-2079; Mobile: 310-260-7093

Program Coordinator is CAS Pilar Cabrera. Office phone: 571-315-2201. Home phone: 571-627-0934. Mobile: 314-330-0948.

FUNDING SPECIFICS: Program fully funded out of I-Bucks

WAIVER: Mission requests waiver of the Department's policy not to send speakers to countries to which the State Department advises US citizens not to travel. All events in this program will take place in Bogot????, Cali and Medellin which are not indicated in the State Department travel advisory as particular areas of caution. RSO concurs with proposed travel and program, and will arrange a security briefing for the speaker. Speaker will be lodged in RSO approved hotels and will be accompanied by a PAS officer and senior FSN for all programs. Other than minor theft incidents no speakers have encountered any problems or threats to their safety in either of these cities.

BROWNFIELD